

Voters First Advisory Commission Workshop

Thursday, January 10, 2008

Room 203, State House

Commission Members Present:

Secretary of State A. Ralph Mollis

State Senator June Gibbs

Sue Stenhouse, Deputy Director, Governor's Office of Community Relations

Roger Harris, RI Disability Vote Project

Jan Ruggiero, Director, Secretary of State's Elections Division

Robert Kando, Director, RI Board of Elections

Commission Members Absent:

State Rep. Joseph Almeida

State Sen. Juan Pichardo

State Rep. Jon Brien

Ken McGill, Director, Pawtucket Board of Canvassers

Staff Members Present:

Paul Caranci, Deputy Secretary of State for Policy and Planning

Mark Welch, Esquire, Legal Counsel

Pamela Lombardi, Executive Assistant to the Secretary of State

General Public Present:

Amy Vitale— American Civil Liberties Union, Rhode Island

Ari Savitzky – Director, FairVote Rhode Island

Eugenia White

Joan Garceau

Roger Garceau

Kate Bowden, RI Disability Law Center, Inc.

Summary of Meeting:

1. Chairman Mollis opened the meeting at 2:30 P.M.

2. Secretary of State staff members distributed the following handouts to the Commissioners and attendees:

a) Meeting agenda

b) White Paper on the Uniform Training & Compensation of Poll Workers

3. Secretary Mollis read a letter from State Senator Walaska stating his priority concerns regarding Voters First are to:

a) Sustain integrity of the voter

b) Properly identify each voter

a) Commissioner Kando summarized the White Paper and recommended approval by the Commission. Upon his motion, second by Commissioner Harris, the Commission members voted unanimously to include the recommendations contained in this White Paper for inclusion in the final report.

b) Secretary Mollis discussed the final report and noted that it would be released first to the Commission members and then to the press

and the public simultaneously. It will contain a letter from the Chairman, a list of Commission members, a list of the 10 core issues reviewed by the Commission, a list of the public hearings and public workshops held and, all of the White Papers approved by the Commission.

c) Commissioner Stenhouse suggested that the final report contain a disclaimer that some of the legislation recommended by the Commission may require a fiscal note or fiscal study. The suggestion was approved by the Commission for inclusion in the final report. It was also noted that the Early Voting White Paper was inadvertently omitted from the list of White Papers to be included in the final report.

The meeting concluded at 3:05 P.M.

Post Adjournment:

1. Secretary Mollis noted that he received correspondence from Mrs. Joan Garceau who asked to address the Commission regarding concerns.

a. Mrs. Garceau addressed the Commission regarding four issues.

i. She requested that the Commission study the issue of primary voting and asked that legislation be considered to allow all residents to be permitted to vote for all positions regardless of party.

ii. Mrs. Garceau had an unfortunate experience in the past of having made an error when voting. When she asked the clerk for assistance in clearing out her vote; the vote was not cleared but actually cast. This experience has enhanced her belief that the poll

workers need to be more educated on the machines that they are responsible for on Election Day.

iii. Wanting proof of having disaffiliated from a specific party after voting in a Primary election, Mrs. Garceau followed up with her local Board of Canvassers and the State's Board of Elections to encourage the practice of distributing copies of disaffiliation sheets. Mrs. Garceau stated that due to determination like hers, steps were taken to allow voters proof that they were unaffiliated for the next Primary.

iv. Mrs. Garceau feels that the Commission should encourage the idea of one primary day nationwide. Use this Commission to make change.

Minutes taken by: Paul Caranci